

# A Short History Of The Dredging Project

By GEORGE BAHM

Few civic-minded Duxburyites will dispute the advisability of dredging our Yacht Basin. None can deny that financial arrangements made for accomplishing the work are advantageous to our Town. But there has appeared one fly in the ointment which presently threatens the ultimate success of the project, and that is the objection of many of our townspeople to the plan for the disposal of the silt. In order that further progress may not be jeopardized, it appears advisable to air the differences at this time to strive for an acceptable solution to the problem.

About six months ago, a public-spirited group of our townspeople and their friends, constituting the Duxbury Bay Improvement Assn., laid the groundwork with the Division of Waterways of the State Department of Public Works for having the basin dredged. About three months ago, a representative of the Division of Waterways surveyed the area, and after consideration of costs involved and other factors, determined that spoilage from the dredging of 10 acres of our harbor to a mean depth of 7 feet could most economically be pumped inland, and subsequently selected as a possible site the Frazar property on the north side of Harrison St. 2600 feet from the Yacht Club littoral. Came a Thursday three weeks before the close of the State's fiscal year which is June 30, and a representative of the Department of Public Works said in effect to the Town's Selectmen that if they could find a place to dump 75,000 cubic yards of spoilage by the next Monday, the State would give \$55,000 to add to \$17,000 raised by the Town and \$8000 contributed by the Duxbury Yacht Club, to dredge the Basin. That means the Yacht Basin, only, as an anchorage. It does not include the channel from Basin to sea, which is not to be dredged. The Selectmen confirmed that Mr. Frazar's land was the most suitable dumping area considered, and with Frazar's full consent so informed the State officials. At a Special Town Meeting in June they were

awarded an extra appropriation of \$5000 for the dredging, \$12,000 having been voted in 1946.

Contract was awarded the Bay State Dredging Company; stakes were emplaced on Mr. Frazar's property delineating the dikes to hold back 10 acres of fill, 5 foot deep, and folks along Harrison St. and Mattakeeset Court were asked to sign papers purporting to exempt the Town for damages involved, although the whole thing was supposedly covered by some kind of insurance. Dredging is scheduled to start shortly after Sept. 15, and will take about 6 weeks, pumping 16 hours a day.

Almost everyone agrees that the Yacht Basin is a community asset which should be made more secure. To increase its attraction for many summerites and year-around boatmen at such a small cost to the town was a bargain. So much so, that the folks attending the Special Town Meeting, passed the \$5000 appropriation with an overwhelming majority. No details of the operation were divulged where the spoilage was to be dumped, for example, nobody thought to ask about them.

## Selectmen Explain

But when the stakes appeared in the marshland, 158 petitioners wanted to know why, and requested a hearing from the Selectmen which they denied. The petitioners did not see the need for desecrating the Bluefish River Marshes with silt, if the silt could be drained elsewhere, such as along

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**DREDGING PROJECT**

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the west shore of Duxbury Bay in the general vicinity of the Yacht Basin where it had been dumped during a previous dredging. The Selectmen replied that the Harrison disposal was the most economical, and that to dump the waste elsewhere, as by barge to sea, would result in a loss of some \$25,000 worth of useful work accomplished.

Barging the silt to sea would cost more than pumping it up Harrison St. Furthermore, to spill it on private property contiguous to the Yacht Basin would entail building larger and more complicated retaining dikes than those required for the Fraser land, and would mean a shifting of discharge pipes as various parcels are filled. The owners of these parcels are agreeable to receiving the spoilage, and at least one has offered to help defray some of the extra cost of this operation. The total acreage appears adequate, and if proper retaining

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SALAD  
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**DUXBURY CLIPPER**

like were built, improvement of the shoreline of the basin would result. But, it is said that the cost of these bulkheads would be prohibitive. Has the practicability of pumping the spoil on to the flats to the southward and southeastward of the Basin been fully investigated? If, as is claimed, silt will not slide on slopes less than one-in-five, why could not artificial islands be thus created to serve as breakwaters for craft in the Basin against turbulences frequently whipped up by brisk south easterly whistling in from the general direction of the Gulf?

Over 10% of our voters are not convinced that proper action has been taken, that their desires have been considered in this bargain, and that the better-skelter dumping into one part of town to improve another is exactly the right thing to do. They want some assurance that the projected disposal of spoilage into the Bluefish Basin is in accord with a well established plan to maintain Duxbury's pastoral attractiveness. They wonder why our Planning Board, an agency set up to advise in cases of this sort, was apparently not consulted. They want to know whether the Bluefish area will continue to be a dumping ground for future dredging. They would like to find out if the River will be purged of the silt which will be an inevitable spill-over from the project here contemplated.

These objectors do not complain of temporary discomforts such as noise, odors, and unsightliness if it can be shown that these will contribute to the ultimate contentment of our people. They do not seek to impede progress and improvement. They approve deeply the Basin. They would like to see the deepening of the channel-to-be implemented, a project which, incidentally, was approved

back in 1893. But they want to be reassured that all these things follow a well-considered plan for improving our town, and that each hand-out from top State levels will not result in an emergency decision giving birth to dissen-

**Alternative**  
So it is deemed preferable to dredge less of the basin by spilling elsewhere, than to dump as presently contemplated. Cannot the contract be renegotiated to effect this change?

These citizens have a right to be heard. A great many of them, feel in this instance that we may have sold our birth-right for ten acres of silt. Where confusion exists in the minds of many citizens, a public airing of the reasons underlying the selection of the Bluefish River marsh as a dump is in order. Let the comparative cost estimates be presented for all to see. Let's find out in what manner this present mud disposal dovetails into the Master Plan for preserving the pristine beauty of this fine old town. Listen to the voice of the dissenters—Duxbury hasn't grown too big for that! Let's look this gift horse squarely in the mouth.

**A PREVIEW OF  
FALL FASHIONS**

Beginning at 2:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 29, there will be a preview of fall fashions by Dorothy Dennt in Town Hall on Tremont St. Refreshments will be served. The Evening Alliance of the First Parish Church is sponsoring the show. Among the models are Natalie Goodrich, Barbara MacDonald, Marjorie Prince, June Johnson, Judy Wirt and Pat Barry. For tickets call Mrs. Robert Crocker (218), Mrs. George Hall (759), or Mrs. Herman Lyon (273).